

February 21, 2013

Chairman Lavin and Members  
Montana House Transportation Committee

RE: HB 513—Exempting Permits for Oversized Vehicles from Environmental Review

Thank you Chairman Lavin and Members, and Representative McChesney for your consideration and interest in the permit process of oversized vehicle loads.

Over the last three years Big Sky Economic Development has worked with Bay Ltd Montana, a manufacturer of pipe and rack modular units used in the refining of the Canadian oil sands. Bay is the first manufacturer of these units in Montana, and the first to successfully deliver these products to Canada traveling from their Billings facility to the border-crossing at Sweet Grass. These are "Edmonton Max" modules that require a 32-J permit to be transported on Montana roads.

The trek from Billings to Sweet Grass, and then on to the oil sands development in Canada, has gone well. Bay has invested millions of their own dollars in creating an unobstructed route (relocating utility service lines) all along the route, with millions more to be invested in this *public infrastructure*. The greatest challenge to date has been the permit process with the Montana Department of Transportation.

The Montana Department of Transportation has invested countless hours on the permits related to Bay's transportation needs, and I believe their staff has worked hard to address the unique needs of this very unique company. However, the process to issue these 32-J permits for Bay was an uncertain process at times that took an extraordinary amount of time. When companies like Bay build a product in Montana they need a swift, fair, and sure process to gain the permits they need to transport their product. HB 513 would begin to help define that process.

Montana is in a very unique position to grow its economy and create jobs by providing the products and services that support energy development in our region, including Canada. We can only take advantage of that position if we have a transportation regulatory process that can respond to these opportunities. And, this is true for every industry in Montana; agricultural, ranching, manufacturing, construction, and many others. All our current and future jobs are in some way tied to transportation.

I'm joined by the Billings Chamber of Commerce in these comments, and together we encourage your positive consideration of measures that would support a responsive transportation permit process. We have to be prepared to move at the pace of business or we'll lose future job-creating opportunities.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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